

**Report of the
Accreditation Visiting Team**

**Fairfield Junior High School
951 North Fairfield Road
Kaysville, Utah 84037**

November 3-4, 2004



Utah State Office of Education
250 East 500 South
P.O. Box 144200
Salt Lake City, Utah 84114-4200

**THE REPORT OF THE
VISITING TEAM REVIEWING**

**Fairfield Junior High School
951 North Fairfield Road
Kaysville, Utah 84037**

November 3-4, 2004

UTAH STATE OFFICE OF EDUCATION

**Patti Harrington, Ed.D.
State Superintendent of Public Instruction**

**DIVISION OF
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND SCHOOL SUCCESS**

Christine Kearl, Associate Superintendent

**Brett Moulding, Director
Curriculum and Instruction**

**Georgia Loutensock, Accreditation Specialist
Curriculum and Instruction**

Salt Lake City, Utah

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword.....	ii
Utah State Board of Education	iii
Davis School District Board of Education and District Administration.....	1
Fairfield Junior High School Administration and Staff.....	2
Fairfield Junior High School Mission Statement and Belief Statements.....	3
Members of the Visiting Team	4
Visiting Team Report.....	5
Chapter 1: School Profile.....	5
Suggested Areas for Further Inquiry.....	6
Chapter 2: The Self-Study Process	6
Chapter 3: Instructional and Organizational Effectiveness	6
Shared Vision, Beliefs, Mission, and Goals	7
Curriculum Development.....	7
Quality Instructional Design	9
Quality Assessment Systems	10
Leadership for School Improvement	11
Community Building	12
Culture of Continuous Improvement and Learning.....	14
Chapter 4: Northwest Association of Accredited Schools (NAAS) Standards I-XI	14
Chapter 5: School Improvement Efforts – Action Plan	15
Chapter 6: Major Commendations and Recommendations of the Visiting Team	15

FOREWORD

The major purpose of the accreditation process is to stimulate school growth and improvement so as to increase student achievement.

In these efforts, the school staff makes a comprehensive evaluation of the school's programs, operations, and results. The school determines how actual practices align to stated objectives and resulting outcomes. It is a three-phased evaluation: (1) self-evaluation, (2) on-site evaluation by an external team of educators, and (3) implementation using units of the evaluation to improve the school by effecting thoughtful change.

The evaluation, November 3-4, 2004, was conducted because of the school's desire to ensure quality education for all students in the school, and to increase student achievement.

The entire staff of Fairfield Junior High School is commended for the time and effort devoted to studying and evaluating the various facets of the total program and to preparing the materials used by the visiting team. The excellent leadership given by Principal Kathy Washburn is also commended.

The staff and administration are congratulated for their desire for excellence at Fairfield Junior High School, and also for the professional attitude of all members of the group, which made it possible for them to see areas of weakness and strength and to suggest procedures for bringing about improvements.

While these recommendations may be used to solicit financial support to acquire some of the materials, equipment, and services needed to carry out a more effective program, it is even more important that the faculty and administration utilize them as they continue to evaluate and modify course offerings and administrative and classroom procedures to more dramatically increase student achievement at Fairfield Junior High School.

Patti Harrington, Ed.D.
State Superintendent
of Public Instruction

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250 East 500 South
P. O. Box 144200
Salt Lake City, UT 84114-4200

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Vernal, UT 84078
Phone: (435) 789-0534

District 5

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Bountiful, UT 84010
Phone: (801) 292-9261

District 10

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5311 South Lucky Clover Ln
Murray, UT 84123
Phone: (801) 261-4221

District 15

Debra G. Roberts
Box 1780
Beaver, UT 84713
Phone: (435) 438-5843

Bonnie Jean Beesley

1492 East Kristianna Cir.
Salt Lake City, UT 84103
Phone: (801) 359-0295

Sara V. Sinclair*

1340 North 1500 East
Logan, UT 84341-2851
Phone: (435) 754-0216

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FAIRFIELD JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

ADMINISTRATION AND STAFF

School Administration

Kathy Washburn Principal
S. James Gordon Assistant Principal
Richard Swanson Assistant Principal

Counseling

Mary Ann Thurgood Counselor
Jesse DeHay Counselor
Lauren Cash Counselor

Support Staff

Jeanette Ellsworth Attendance Secretary
Luane Macfarlane Head Secretary
Rodney Murray Custodian
Rodney Southam Head Custodian
Sherri Stocks Cafeteria Manager

Faculty

Dwight Alldredge	Nolan Fawcett	Lola Palmer
Brooke Anderson	Daniel Greenaway	Melvin Parker
Mary Ayers	Sharon Hallsten	Bonnie Raleigh
Rosalind Beckstead	Elline Harrison	Phil Rambikur
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Delilah Brinkerhoff	Heather Hughes	Sydnee Seager
William Carter	Kathleane Kaczor	Cindy Smith
Vince Clow	Jonathan LaFontaine	Sue Stayner
Colleen Cobia	Justin Lillywhite	Julie Taylor
Gloria Comiskey	Janet Loureiro	Michael Thompson
Christine Deppe	Lisa Miner	Linda Tuke
Deborah Dickson	Carla Money	April Turneau
Christian Earl	Nancy Nelson	Lisa Wall
Kathryn Eller	Josie Nielsen	Tracie Watts
Dennis Erickson	Jay Nolan	

FAIRFIELD JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

MISSION STATEMENT

The Fairfield Junior High School learning community fosters opportunities for students to explore their potential, acquire essential skills, develop responsibility, and prepare for a lifetime of achievement in an ever-changing world.

Falcons SOAR!

Skills, **O**ppportunity, **A**chievement and **R**esponsibility are important to all at Fairfield Junior High. This theme will continue and will be a focus throughout the accreditation process and implementation phase.

BELIEF STATEMENTS

1. Education is a lifelong process which enhances the individual's quality of life.
2. Students feel free to think, explore, and participate when they feel valued and safe.
3. Responsible behavior is encouraged when caring adults model respect for the individual.
4. Students become contributing citizens in the world community by learning to value themselves and others as they solve problems.
5. When teachers and students share insights tailored to students' ages and interests, students learn to think critically and globally.
6. Academic excellence results from following the state core curriculum guidelines and utilizing best teaching practices.
7. Students will recognize their own personal progress through on-going monitoring of their performance by teachers, parents, peers, and themselves.
8. Students' educational and social needs are best met through the cooperative effort of educators, parents and the community.
9. Students will make the connection between education and the world of work when the school and community share resources.
10. The informed use of instructional technology assists the students in analyzing and using information appropriately and effectively across the curriculum to prepare them for the world of work.
11. Honest, integrity, and personal responsibility are values students develop when they are accountable for their behavior.
12. A student's self-esteem and attitude is greatly influenced by a teacher's ability to accentuate their positive attributes.

MEMBERS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Shannon Hoskins, Sand Ridge Junior High School, Weber School District,
Visiting Team Co-Chair

Craig Jessop, Wahlquist Junior High School, Weber School District,
Visiting Team Co-Chair

Doug Bingham, Wasatch Junior High School, Granite School District

Teri Lynn Cook, West Hills Middle School, Jordan School District

Michael Goodman, Mount Jordan Middle School, Jordan School District

VISITING TEAM REPORT
FAIRFIELD JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

CHAPTER 1: SCHOOL PROFILE

Fairfield Junior High is just ten years old. Since it opened in 1994, Fairfield has won many awards and has developed many programs that are designed to benefit the students that attend there. There is strong community support, as exemplified by the active Community Council and PTSA.

The student population is growing. The students come mainly from middle class homes. Parents' occupations range from unskilled to highly skilled, including professional and chief executive officers. Some students live in government-subsidized apartment complexes and a domestic violence shelter.

The students are predominantly Caucasian (almost 90 percent). Just over two percent of students are African-American, and 1.6 percent are Hispanic.

a) What significant findings were revealed by the school's analysis of its profile?

Math scores on the SAT from 1997-2004 are typically lower than the overall district average, while other test scores are typically higher than the district average.

Fairfield Junior High was able to identify students who are low proficiency. The profile reveals that the school has designed appropriate interventions for each individual student.

Demographics changed in 2003, bringing in 20 percent more students, many of who are at risk, unlike the stable population in middle-priced homes previously characteristic of the school. These at-risk students are sheltered by government-subsidized apartment complexes and a domestic violence shelter near the school.

Considering the school population and demographics, Fairfield has a relatively small number of identified resource students.

b) What modifications to the school profile should the school consider for the future?

Parent, student, and teacher surveys are ambiguous in their rankings. Percentages should total near 100 percent. The high number of "undecided" responses leaves the reader questioning what this means. (Were "undecided" voices combined with the "disagree" and "highly disagree" voices?)

Condense the tables and data gathered down to those elements that truly give insight into **student learning**. It's sometimes difficult to wade through all of the data to find the pertinent information.

Suggested Areas for Further Inquiry:

- Disaggregate information on students who have been labeled “at risk” based on where they live.

CHAPTER 2: THE SELF-STUDY PROCESS

- a) *To what extent has the school community engaged in a collaborative self-study process on behalf of students?*

The Visiting Team found Fairfield Junior High to be an outstanding example of collaboration among stakeholders—parents, teachers, administrators, counselors, and students. All were involved in the formulation of mission and belief statements, identification of the desired results of student learning, focus groups, department analyses, and action plans.

- b) *To what extent does the school's self-study accurately reflect the school's current strengths and limitations?*

The self-study takes an honest, objective look at the school's organizational competency and analyzes instructional effectiveness. Weaknesses are recognized and plans are evident for continued growth.

CHAPTER 3: INSTRUCTIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

Fairfield Junior High School's desired results for student learning (DRSLs) are as follows:

1. Demonstrate the ability to follow instructions and solve problems.
2. Demonstrate goal setting, prioritizing, and evaluating in order to become independent critical thinkers.
3. Demonstrate effective oral, written, and interactive communication skills
4. Demonstrate an understanding of wellness.

Shared Vision, Beliefs, Mission, and Goals:

- a) *To what extent did the school facilitate a collaborative process to build a shared vision for the school (mission) that defines a compelling purpose and direction for the school?*

Teachers, students, and administrators all worked together to form and adopt the mission and belief statements for Fairfield Junior High School. They began the process of developing a mission statement by reviewing the mission statement from 1998. They also investigated ideas and concepts from many different schools and, after discussion and review, they reached a consensus involving all of the stakeholders.

The belief statements represent the majority thinking of the school community and establish a direct relationship between expectations and actual student performance. They reflect the collective vision, purpose, and direction of Fairfield Junior High School.

It was the consensus of the Visiting Team that the school reviewed both the needs of the students and the school's philosophy of how to meet those needs while creating and adopting the mission statement.

- b) *To what extent has the school defined a set of beliefs that reflect the commitment of the administration and staff to support student achievement and success?*

The mission and belief statements are comprehensive and address the major issues pertinent to the decision- and policy-making process. They have been posted throughout the school for all the students and teachers to see, and are available on the web page for parents and visitors.

- c) *To what extent do the school's mission and beliefs align to support the school's desired results for student learning (DRSLs)?*

The school's mission and belief statements are reflected in the desired results of student learning.

Curriculum Development:

- a) *To what extent does the staff work collaboratively to ensure the curriculum is based on clearly defined standards and the Utah Core Curriculum (with inclusion of the Utah Life Skills)?*

It is clear that the individual departments and seventh grade teams are collaborating to align their curricula with the State Core. The school takes advantage of early release Friday time to collaborate on State Core guidelines. To their credit, much

time was spent by the staff on non-contract time to complete their collaboration efforts, often as much as two or three hours, twice a month. Evidence of their collaboration efforts is found in all rooms throughout the school. State Core guidelines are displayed in a prominent place in each room, along with the objectives for each day. In many cases, State Core guidelines and DRSLs were tied into individual lesson plans and activities. One teacher said, “It is important for us to collaborate, so that students will know the things that they need to by the time that they leave our school.” The collaboration activities involved all stakeholders in the school, including administrators, teachers, parents and PTSA groups, and students.

Collaboration for student achievement is one strength of this school. Departments have collaborated on curriculum maps focusing on State Core guidelines and objectives. Many teachers, however, expressed the need for more time in which to continue collaboration and accomplish the goals that have been established during focus group and committee work. One example that many teachers cited as a future project would be the development and use of schoolwide rubrics in a variety of areas.

Collaboration has become part of the culture of this school. Most teachers are working together to improve their teaching practices and student performance.

- b) *To what extent does the teaching staff work collaboratively to support the development of a curriculum that focuses on the school's desired results for student learning?*

Throughout the school all teachers are familiar with the DRSLs and with their importance. The accreditation process has brought the teaching of lifelong skills to the educational forefront, providing the impetus for reflection and reevaluation of current teaching methods, as well as planning and collaboration for new and improved methodologies.

The teaching staff is using all available time to collaborate and develop curricula that support student learning. Each Friday school is released one hour early to facilitate collaborative time. Currently, two Fridays each month are used for teacher in-service/professional development. One Friday each month is reserved for departmental work, and one week for team collaboration. Some teacher schedules are organized to promote collaboration. For example, the Mathematics Department instructors all have the same lunch period; much of this time is used for discussion and collaboration on student assessment issues.

The Visiting Team saw strong evidence that teachers in most classrooms are using the DRSLs as a basis for instruction in concert with district and State Core guidelines and objectives.

Quality Instructional Design:

- a) *To what extent does the professional staff design and implement a variety of learning experiences that actively engage students?*

Each month the faculty engages in schoolwide professional development to increase teacher teaching strategy portfolios. Project CRISS is used as the basis for teacher development opportunities throughout the year. The Six Traits of Writing program is also used across the curriculum, with particular focus on the five-paragraph essay. Strategies such as two-column note taking have been utilized across much of the curriculum. More teachers are using alternative assessments to determine student growth. The Visiting Team saw many classroom examples of project-based and hands-on learning opportunities.

- b) *To what extent does the professional staff employ a variety of instructional strategies to ensure the needs of different learners are met?*

The staff has spent considerable time determining the needs of different subgroups and developing varied teaching strategies. Included in these strategies are the Six Traits of Writing, CRISS Strategies, learning styles strategies, and tutoring. The school is particularly strong in after-school programs. Teachers work to maximize time on task for students.

Leadership groups are organized to identify learning deficiencies and provide input on student needs. SEOPs are used by counselors, students, and parents to help identify student needs. Learning style inventories are used by counselors and teachers to improve quality teaching practices. Teachers at Fairfield use many different interventions to support students. Support groups such as the Falcon Academy, First Friends, Peer Support, Native American Tutoring, and Secret Pals provide support for struggling students. All teachers are available for student support and help after school.

- c) *To what extent do the professional staff and leadership provide additional opportunities which support student learning?*

Two Fridays each month are used for teacher professional development. Teaching strategies are explored, implemented in the classroom, and reported to the faculty. Teachers reflect on the success of each strategy and make refinements for further implementation. Faculty meetings are also used to teach a CRISS Strategy each month.

Accommodations are made by all teachers for students on 504s or IEPs, or those with discovered learning challenges. Seventh grade teams have been implemented and have shown some success. Plans are being made to extend this program to other grade levels.

Quality Assessment Systems:

- a) *To what extent has the staff developed classroom or schoolwide assessments based on clearly articulated expectations for student achievement?*

Through teacher interviews and classroom observations, teachers indicated that they are creating various assessments to evaluate their classroom expectations. Teachers are aligning their curricula within the departments and are moving toward quality assessments for each subject area based on the State Core, which would provide data on individual student achievement. There is evidence of a desire to develop departmental assessments that would focus on the standards for student achievement.

The Fairfield Junior High staff members indicated an interest in creating a standard rubric for grading the DRSLs, and are aware of the need for such schoolwide assessment. The students felt that the teachers and administrators were responsive to their ideas for change, and like the changes that have been made in the classrooms. The Visiting Team recommends that the staff members continue to develop their schoolwide assessment plans based on the expectations for student achievement.

- b) *To what extent are assessments of student learning developed using methods that reflect the intended purpose and performance standards?*

Teachers at Fairfield indicate that they are utilizing various methods of assessment based on the type of learning to be assessed. The staff and students indicated that essays, reports, oral presentations, PowerPoint presentations, reflective writing, and other authentic assessments were being used, as well as quizzes and multiple-choice tests. A portion of the staff indicated an interest in learning more about the use and development of rubrics in their assessments. The Visiting Team recommends some professional development that covers the use and development of rubrics and alternative and authentic assessments.

- c) *To what extent are assessments designed, developed, and used in a fair and equitable manner?*

The Visiting Team found evidence of several teachers who give the same assignment to the same class in multiple formats to accommodate student needs. Faculty members are made aware of IEPs and 504s for students to assist them in minimizing bias and providing more equitable assessment. One of the DRSLs for Fairfield Junior High is for students to demonstrate the ability to apply and transfer knowledge to produce a quality product. Students feel that they are given opportunities to demonstrate their learning through various projects and assessments. All stakeholders are aware of the need for uniform grading practices, and the staff at Fairfield is moving toward a more equitable procedure for grading.

The Visiting Team recommends the continued study and implementation of fair and equitable assessments.

Leadership for School Improvement:

- a) *To what extent does the school leadership promote quality instruction by fostering an academic learning climate and actively supporting teaching and learning?*

The leadership of Fairfield Junior High is actively involved in promoting teacher and team collaboration and in professional development. Three of the four core subjects (math, English, and science) are teamed together in seventh grade to promote transition to the junior high setting and to allow and encourage collaboration across curricula.

Cross-curricular activities are encouraged in eighth grade between English and social studies classes. Teachers are beginning to teach with similar vocabulary and outcome expectations across the curriculum, to enhance student understanding and to encourage students to produce a quality product. This is especially evident in writing using the five-paragraph plan for essays and other projects.

The school leadership has introduced Project CRISS to the teachers during professional development time. Teachers are given a variety of strategies and then encouraged to use them in the classroom. The Visiting Team witnessed the use of a variety of new teaching strategies. Students also seem to be aware that teachers are using new and different techniques.

- b) *To what extent does the school leadership employ effective decision making that is data-driven, research-based, and collaborative?*

During the visit, the school leadership discussed data collected from CRTs and other tests. The school has developed several remedial programs to assist students who are struggling. Students and faculty members mentioned them often in discussions with the Visiting Team. The Math Department uses pre- and post-tests to determine the correct academic placement of students for their educational success.

Teacher development is based on best practices using the CRISS Project materials. To a major extent, the decisions made for the school and the school's direction are made through collaboration among the leadership, teachers, parents, and students.

In-house research guides school programs and helps stakeholders determine focus for improvement of student learning.

- c) *To what extent does the school leadership monitor progress in student achievement and instructional effectiveness through a comprehensive assessment system and continuous reflection?*

The school leadership is very cognizant of national and state test scores. Administrators have developed numerous programs for remediation. They are aware of the need to develop schoolwide assessments, and have included that in their action plan. The entire process of developing the accreditation plan and many ongoing programs to help students are the result of much deliberation and reflection.

- d) *To what extent does the school leadership provide skillful stewardship by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources of the school for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment?*

The Visiting Team is very impressed with the ability of the leadership team to work hand in hand with staff members to ensure a smooth-running organization. Each member of the staff efficiently does his or her work to provide for a safe, comfortable learning environment. The leadership team is often out in the halls, working with a parent, or working alongside staff members.

- e) *To what extent does the school leadership make decisions related to the allocation and use of resources which align with the school goals, the achievement of the DRSLs, and school improvement efforts?*

The leadership team uses resources wisely but freely to enhance teachers' efforts to assist students. A variety of remediation programs and materials have been provided. The school is currently considering the purchase of software that will assist in the development of rubrics to be used across the curriculum for assessment of DRSLs and their implementation.

- f) *To what extent does the school leadership empower the school community and encourage commitment, participation, collaboration, and shared responsibility for student learning?*

The Visiting Team saw substantial evidence of involvement by students, parents, teachers, and administrators in a collaborative effort to develop and implement their DRSLs. The parents met by the Visiting Team were very motivated and excited to continue their participation in the process. They appreciate what the school has done and continues to do for the students and their education.

Community Building:

- a) *To what extent does the school foster community building and working relationships within the school?*

The Visiting Team observed many examples of a collaborative school climate that fosters community building and positive working relationships within the school, which focuses on student learning. The faculty and staff have a caring, nurturing, and inclusive attitude that is recognized by students and parents. Teachers give many unpaid hours before and after school to assist students needing remediation and to supervise extracurricular activities. Teachers also supervise clubs during lunch and after school.

There is great concern for incoming seventh grade students. Orientation sessions are held for sixth graders each spring, and a half-day Harry Potter Summer Camp for incoming seventh graders is hosted by teachers, student body officers, and cheerleaders close to the beginning of the school year. Seventh grade core teachers have been divided into teaching teams.

The school has a team of students known as Peer Support students. These older students work one-on-one with ESL students one period a week, and with special needs students one period a week. Peer Support students also work as “Secret Pals” with seventh grade students who are having academic problems, and are assigned as “First Friends” to help new transfer students adjust to their new school environment.

There is evidence of cross-curricular collaboration in the eighth and ninth grades between language arts and social studies, as well as special education and science. Members of the faculty have recognized a need to develop schoolwide assessment rubrics to identify when students have produced a quality product or have communicated effectively in oral and/or written work in any class. They have adopted the Six Traits of Writing and five-paragraph essay models schoolwide, and have addressed further assessment development in the school improvement plan.

b) To what extent does the school extend the school community through collaborative networks that support student learning?

There is an extraordinarily high level of parental and community support and involvement in school programs such as mock job interviews and job shadowing for ninth grade students and Reality Town for eighth grade students. Parental participation in SEOPs for 2003-2004 was at 95 percent.

The departments have met with feeder schools to coordinate programs and confer with other district teachers on activities and teaching strategies.

Culture of Continuous Improvement and Learning:

- a) *To what extent does the school build skills and the capacity for improvement through comprehensive and ongoing professional development programs focused on the school's goals for improvement?*

The faculty has two professional development meetings each month to discuss and learn new teaching strategies, which are incorporated schoolwide. It was evident from talking with students that they are familiar with and able to describe many of the new strategies that are being implemented throughout the school. Two examples are the five-paragraph essay and two-column note taking strategies.

The school and the district provide ongoing professional development during the school year and during the summer.

The three administrators and fifteen faculty members have advanced degrees, and several are in current advanced degree programs. Twenty-one have an ESL endorsement, and all but ten have two or more endorsements. One teacher is National Board-certified. This indicates a commitment to personal and professional improvement to advance student learning.

- b) *To what extent does the school create conditions that support productive change and continuous improvement?*

The school has actively created conditions and momentum for productive change and continuous improvement by involving students and committed parents in the accreditation process. The school has been open to all concerns and has actively sought to involve parents from all segments of the school-area boundaries. It is evident that the stakeholders have caught the vision of school improvement and are committed to the implementation of the school improvement plan.

CHAPTER 4: NORTHWEST ASSOCIATION OF ACCREDITED SCHOOLS (NAAS) STANDARDS I-XI

This chapter does not apply to Fairfield Junior High School. Most Utah public junior high/middle schools are not accredited through the NAAS, only by the USOE – it is their choice to join or not.

CHAPTER 5: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS – ACTION PLAN

- a) *To what extent is the schoolwide action plan adequate in addressing the critical areas for follow-up?*

The action plan is tied to the findings of the focus groups. The Visiting Team recommends that the action plan be reviewed and reformulated to reflect the demands of the DRSLs as they are implemented schoolwide, using the findings of the focus groups and department analysis as guidelines.

- b) *To what extent is there sufficient commitment to the action plan, schoolwide and system-wide?*

The Visiting Team found significant support for the action plan among school personnel, students, and community members. Already, the school is moving ahead with its plan to actively improve instruction and student learning. The Visiting Team witnessed many instances of lesson planning and presentation that related directly to the school's DRSLs. Parents have spent many hours assisting with analysis, evaluation, and planning. They put great stock in the process and believe in the school's plan and ability to implement the plan.

- c) *How sound does the follow-up process that the school intends to use for monitoring the accomplishments of the schoolwide action plan appear to be?*

The school has developed a sound plan for monitoring the accomplishments of the action plan. However, the Visiting Team is recommending that the action plan be rewritten to align with the DRSLs rather than the focus group outcomes as currently written. Given the level of commitment exhibited by the school staff and community, the Visiting Team has no reservations about the school's desire and ability to develop an adequate plan and to follow it to the fullest.

CHAPTER 6: MAJOR COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Commendations:

- The Visiting Team commends the school for its efforts to include stakeholders from all parts of the community in the process of self-study. The team recognizes the special effort made to include representatives from new demographic areas that were recently added to the school boundaries.

- The Visiting Team commends the school for its efforts to advocate for all students, especially at-risk students, with special programs and accommodations. The team specifically recognizes the many programs that are available to enrich the lives of students, and the integration of seventh-grade students into the junior high through the use of teams.
- The Visiting Team commends the school's staff members for working together in departments, teams, community groups, and leadership groups to achieve a common direction and purpose.

Recommendations:

- The Visiting Team recommends that the school align its action plan with the desired results of student learning, rather than the focus group reports as presently written.
- The Visiting Team recommends that follow-up surveys be written in such a way that all the results can be reported and analyzed, rather than just the responses of "agree/strongly agree" and "undecided." Those who disagree or are unsatisfied need to have their voice recognized.
- The Visiting Team recommends that the work toward schoolwide collaboration being done by the school and school community continue, so that their vision for continuity in student learning can be realized.
- The Visiting Team recommends that the school continue its work toward schoolwide use of the DRSLs and schoolwide indicators.